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SUBJECT: Goma Report for January 10 - Day five of Kivus Conference; Trouble with CNDP and big speeches

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Kivus conference will be extended until January 20. CNDP threatened to boycott but is apparently now willing to continue attending. Three heavyweights -- Kamerhe, Ruberwa, and Mbusa -- gave contrastingly positive speeches, each emphasizing that the conference represented an historic opportunity.

Conference President Malu Malu reiterated that the FDLR will not be invited to the Conference, but both he and Foreign Minister Mbusa left the door open by noting that the Nairobi communique calls for FDLR-GDRC contact. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Kivus conference in Goma will now continue until January 20. Conference president Malu Malu explained to international observers January 10 that President Kabila wanted the multiplicity of vying groups to have a hearing and wanted to ensure that the key discussions on the margins, especially with armed groups, not be compressed. The plenary January 11 will be devoted to speeches by representatives of each ethnic group in the Kivus.

CNDP threatens to leave

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¶3. (SBU) Nkunda reduced CNDP attendance January 10 from twelve to four and threatened to boycott the conference altogether. The reason was that during the meeting that the international observers had with the CNDP on January 9, the Republican Guard (a special unit within the army that is used for Presidential protection) asked MONUC representative Christian Manahl whether one of the members of the CNDP delegation was Georges Mirindi, who had been convicted in absentia for the assassination of Laurent Kabila. Manahl ascertained that the delegate was Seraphin Mirindi (Mirindi is a common name) and no relation of Georges Mirindi, and the Republican Guard went away. However, the chief of the CNDP delegation, Kambasu Ngeve, issued a written complaint; the delegation attending the conference January 10 was reduced to four; and Nkunda threatened to boycott altogether. Malu Malu said that he and Tutsi leaders Denis Ntare and Emmanuel Kamanzi met with the CNDP delegates in the course of January 10 and were assured that CNDP would attend in full January 11.

¶4. (SBU) January 10, the first full plenary, was devoted to major speech-giving, dominated by three heavyweights, President of the National Assembly Vital Kamerhe, RCD head Azarias Ruberwa, and Foreign Minister Antipas Mbusa. Kamerhe and Mbusa gave rousing, charismatic speeches, often bringing applause, while Ruberwa (the first Tutsi to address the conference) was serious and measured in his tone. All three emphasized that the conference offered an historic opportunity to end conflict in the Kivus.

Kamerhe, Ruberwa and Mbusa give speeches

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¶5. (SBU) Tracking what he had told the international observers the previous day, Kamerhe told the conference that it was essential that it produce a concrete plan to end conflict. It would take great courage to commit to a political and diplomatic solution, rather than a military one. Leaders of armed groups would need to have intense discussions and elaborate a plan of disengagement, ceasefire, movement of troops to transit centers, and brassage. CNDP and Mai Mai had claims that had to be seriously examined. If Rwanda accepted Congo's plan to deal with the FDLR, Nkunda would have less basis for claiming he was the only one who could solve the FDLR issue. If UNHCR produced a plan for identifying refugees, Nkunda could no longer claim he was the only salvation for refugees. These were not insoluble issues. Kamerhe openly told the audience that he advocated that the tough issues be handled in his Wise Men's Committee ("Comite des Sages"). In a master political stroke, he called on one member of every ethnic and armed group to come forward and shake hands, which they did smilingly.

¶6. (SBU) Ruberwa was the only speaker to emphasize the themes of good governance, protection of human rights, and combating corruption. Without ever mentioning the words "Tutsi" or "Rwanda," he cogently made the case for protection of minorities, punishing hate talk among any office-holders or candidates, and paving the way for the return of refugees. There was no visible negative reaction in the audience to any element of his long discourse. He urged the conference to give every ethnic and armed group a thorough and fair hearing. He described the mission of the conference as finding a way this week to begin the end of conflict in the Kivus.

¶7. (SBU) Mbusa went even further back in history in his even longer but riveting speech, emphasizing that there was no recourse today but to cooperate with Rwanda. He observed, in a jocular tone, that the rest of the world held the Congolese's vast country to ridicule

KINSHASA 00000024 002 OF 002

for heaping blame on such a tiny neighbor, so small that it was barely discernible on maps. He described as delusional claims that Congolese refugees were a mere fabrication of Rwanda. It was time for the people of the Kivus to put such fantastical ideas away. Nor could the Congolese demand that the FDLR problem be resolved through inter-Rwandan dialogue. There was now a serious plan for coping with the FDLR and the conference needed to play its role in ensuring that the Kivu populace bought into the plan.

Other ways to talk with FDLR

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¶8. (SBU) In the evening meeting with the international observers, Malu Malu said that FDLR would not be invited into the conference but rather conference leaders would seek and meet with FDLR. Mbusa emphasized that DRC was obliged to talk to FDLR now, under the Nairobi communique and the Congolese plan. EU envoy van de Geer outlined further contacts that the international observers planned to have with armed groups, ethnic groups, and civil society. Malu Malu approved all these meetings, and Mbusa advocated more, rather than fewer, meetings -- e.g., seeing Banyamulenge and Hutu groups separately, given the deep divisions in those communities, and meeting smaller ethnic groups, such as Hunde, Nianga, and Tembo, separately rather than together.

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